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Members of the Ministry of Defence and SCG Army on Reform

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During the 20 seminars on the security sector reform, organized in June 2004 in agreement and cooperation with the Ministry of Defence of SCG and the SMAF General Staff, the Centre for Civil-Military Relations applied the short questionnaire, aimed at learning what members of the Ministry of Defence and Army think about current problems in reforming the Army. There were about 440 members of the Army and MoD that participated in the seminars, and 414 participants filled out the questionnaire. Therefore, the sample of respondents consisted of 414 participants of the seminars – professional members of the SMAF and MoD. The basic parameters of the sample were; male 100%; with a university education 87.9%, with a junior college education 3.4%, with a secondary school education 8.7%; age groups from 20-30 years old 15.7%, 31-40 years old 31.6%, 40-50 years old 44.2% and over 50 years old 8.5%. Although the participants in the seminars are not representative of a randomly chosen sample of members of the Army and Ministry, considering the high number of respondents, the obtained results are a rather reliable indicator of the attitude of members of the Serbian and Montenegrin Army towards current issues on reform and its further development.

Herein, we will show the research results of the opinions and views of professional members of the SCG Army in regard to: perceptions of security threats, needs and directions of future reform of the military and defence, certain aspects of the situation in the army and opinion on the Army’s participation in peacekeeping missions, as well as their attitudes towards the European Union and the Partnership for Peace.

1. Security Threats

According to professional members of the SCG Army, the security of our country is most threatened by: potential conflicts within multi-ethnic communities (73.4%), organized crime (32.1%) and economic and social conflicts and tension (29.6%) (Table 1).

Table 1

	Total	Age				Education	
In your opinion, what most threatens the security of our country?		20-30	30-40	40-50	50+	Secondary and Junior college	University
1. Possible new wars	10.9	08	09	13	14	12	11
2. Conflicts within multi-ethnic communities	73.4	82	69	74	71	84	72
3. Disintegration of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro	11.9	08	12	14	09	12	12
4. Another armed aggression of NATO and/or USA	03.2	05	03	03		8	03
5. Economic and social conflicts, tensions	29.6	25	25	32	40	24	30
6. Violently ousting the democratic government	01.7	02		03	03		02
7. Local and regional terrorism	17.4	11	23	16	14	2	20
8. Organized crime	32.1	35	38	27	31	35	32
9. Cannot make an assessment	0.7		01	01			01

	Total	Age					Education	
In your opinion, what most threatens the security of our country?		20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60-70	Secondary and Junior college	University
1. Possible new wars	10.9	08	09	13	14		12	11
2. Conflicts within multi-ethnic communities	73.4	82	69	74	71		84	72
3. Disintegration of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro	11.9	08	12	14	09		12	12
4. Another armed aggression of NATO and/or USA	03.2	05	03	03			8	03
5. Economic and social conflicts, tensions	29.6	25	25	32	40		24	30
6. Violently ousting the democratic government	01.7	02		03	03			02
7. Local and regional terrorism	17.4	11	23	16	14		2	20
8. Organized crime	32.1	35	38	27	31		35	32
9. Cannot make an assessment	0.7		01	01				01

As for perceptions of potential public security threats, the Army and MoD fully agree with the general public in Serbia and Montenegro – the order of assessment of threats is the same, and the percents are also very close.¹ Also, it is worth mentioning that recent assessment of the worsening political-security situation in southern Serbia shows that public concern of possible conflicts within multi-ethnic communities is not unfounded. This can be confirmed by some incidents in Vojvodina, based on nationalistic motives, although they do not make a serious security threat at the moment.

2. Opinions on the Need for Military Reform

In response to the question of *whether reform of the Army should be carried out*, almost two-thirds of the respondents considered that reform of the Army should be urgently carried out. The option that at the moment there are more important matters to be dealt with was chosen by 34.4%. Since only 1.2% agree with the view that there is no need for reform, it can be deduced that there is distinct verbal support of members of the Army in carrying out reform, and more than likely, it also expresses the willingness to practically support reform.

Another important fact is that there are no greater differences in regard to the level of education of the respondents. The fact that the youngest officers and non commissioned officers are most willing to accept reform is also of value. On the other hand, the view that there are more important matters at the moment to be dealt with is most common amongst those over 50 years of age (46%). It is interesting that almost twice as many respondents in the Army than in the sample in Serbia (63.1%:33.2%) consider that reform should be urgently carried out². On the basis of this, can it be concluded that this hesitation and indolence in carrying out reform of the defence sector, including the Army, also bothers members of the Army?

The question of the state budget allocation was aimed to acquire indirectly the picture of the priorities of social development and the position of military and defence according to professional soldiers and employees of the MoD (Table 2). Since the respondents were given the possibility of choosing two answers, the total percent in the columns is more than a hundred percent.

Table 2

	Total	Age					Education	
If you were given the opportunity to manage the state budget, what would be your priority for		20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60-70	Secondary and Junior college	University

would be your priority for
spending the funds?

1. Advancement of the school system and sciences	32.6	31	31	33	40	32	33
2. Advancement of health care	12.7	11	12	14	11	12	13
3. Advancement of the Army and country's defence	41.5	41	49	38	34	46	41
4. Development of transportation and roads	9.5	06	09	10	14	04	10
5. Advancement of culture and sport	2.5	02	05	02		04	02
6. Industrial development	49.3	59	44	48	54	54	49
7. Agricultural development	37.8	39	36	39	34	28	39

The results obtained are to a certain extent expected. Advancement of the military and defence took a very high second place on the list of priorities and 41.5% of the respondents chose it as a priority. On the other hand, an important fact is that professional members of the Army very realistically perceive the present situation in the country and they have put industrial development (49.3%) before the development of their professional field. Agricultural development took a significant place on the list of priorities with 37.8% of the respondents choosing it as a priority, followed by, advancement of the school system and sciences (32.6%). There are no noticeable differences according to demographic variables only that younger members of the Army (49%) understandably prefer that there is more funding for defence.

If the military and defence is left out, as for the remaining priorities, there is a great deal of agreement with the general sample of the Serbian and Montenegrin citizens. It is interesting that 45.2% of the respondents in Serbia would allot funds for the advancement of health care, while in the Army the corresponding percent is 12.7%³. This difference is most likely a result of better organization of medical services in the Army in comparison to the civilian health care, therefore members of the Army do not feel the urgency of this problem. This, of course, does not mean that there are not serious problems in military health care that deserve the attention of the Ministry of Defence and SCG Assembly.

3. Situation in the Army

In the following question, the views of members of the Army on the situation in the Army were investigated, its qualification in carrying out tasks, state of arms and equipment, living standard, readiness for reform and influence of secret services on political events.

The overwhelming majority of people polled (82%) consider that members of the Army are very qualified in carrying out their tasks. Socio-demographic variables do not create great differences amongst respondents. Senior officers, at the brigade command level, give the most favourable assessment of the level of training, with the greatest percent (86%) either mainly agreeing or fully agreeing with the assertion. This is understandable because they are directly in charge of staff training so on this way, they assessed their own work and results.

On the other hand, the overwhelming majority (83%) also considers that the military is neither well armed nor well equipped. It is interesting that not even one respondent answered that they fully agreed with this assertion! The percent of those who do not agree with this assertion that the Army is well-armed in the general sample of SCG citizens is somewhat less (Serbia 51.2%, Montenegro 42.7%), because a significant number of respondents, especially females, think that they are not competent enough to make an assessment.⁴

The majority of respondents (71,9%) consider the living conditions of the soldiers dissatisfactory. There is a significant difference in accepting this view in relation to the level of education – highly educated respondents more readily accept this view than those with a secondary or junior college education (74% : 59%). In this way, perceptions of living conditions of the soldiers in the SMAF are similar to the assessment of the general sample of Serbian and Montenegrin citizens.⁵

Professional members of the Army are almost unanimous in their assessment that the living standard of military officers is dissatisfactory (96%). Almost all of the younger (23-30 years old) and oldest (over 50 years old) respondents fully agree or just agree with this point of view. Considering the high level of agreement, socio-demographic variables do not create significant differences between the respondents. Respondents in the sample of the SCG citizens have a similar point of view, only in a lower percent.⁶ Therefore, within the society, there is agreement that military officers are not rewarded adequately in accord with the difficulty of their profession and responsibility they carry in defending the country.

Most of the participants in the seminar consider that the majority of officers favour urgent military reform (72.3%). There are more highly educated respondents who support this view than those with secondary or junior college diplomas (74% : 62%). In the age category, supporters of this assertion are the fewest amongst the group over 50 years of age, which follows the opinion of most of them that military reform is not an urgent priority.